1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

When it arrived in Fort Jameson District Mpezeni's group consisted of three segments 4, 5 and 6, all of which belonged to the now dispersed segment 1. By virtue of his claim to be the heir of Zwangendaba, and hence the lord of segment 1, Mpezeni exercised control over segments 6 and 7 as well as over his own segment 4. It appears that the same procedure was adopted with these adhering segments as was followed earlier with the small groups of independent refugees who joined Zwangendaba near Delagoa Bay. For purposes of organization they were attached to the headquarters of the highest segment. As the headquarters of segment 1 had gone away with Mwambera's group, the senior segment headquarters in Mpezeni's group was now that of segment 4, and it was to this village that people from all three segments came to the first fruits festival, and which we may perhaps regard as the capital of Mpezeni's State.

It so happened that in 1898 when British Administration began in this area, the headquarters and most of the dependent villages of segments 6 and 7 lay on the east side of the Zambezi-Nyasa watershed, and the bulk of segment 4 on the west. We might expect that at any place at which this Ngoni group settled, the three major segments of the State would occupy roughly distinct areas, and that as segments 6 and 7 were smaller than segment 4 they might lie on the fringe of the settlement. What appears to have happened is that the Ngoni moved eastwards into that region where the Europeans first found them, and that they were contemplating moving farther east into the present Nyasaland. Segments 6 and 7 were in the van of this advance, and the watershed, which here runs very roughly north and south, happened by accident to separate them from segment 4. This accident has been of considerable importance in the subsequent history of Mpezeni's group, for while segment 4 found itself in the territory of North-Eastern Rhodesia, administered by the British South Africa Company, segments 5 and 6 formed part of the Nyasaland Protectorate, under the Foreign Office. Thus the State was again divided into two, and the Native Authorities which have developed belong to two separate hierarchies of administration.

In this study we are particularly concerned with the fortunes of segment 4, in Northern Rhodesia. Although Mpezeni was the head of this segment, it seems that his physiological mother was not lady of the segment, for she was only a junior linked co-wife. However this woman was prompted to independent status by the formation, within segment 4, of segment 11 (Dingeni) of which she became the lady. The senior man in this segment was her second

1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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son, while her first son Mpezeni remained head of segment 4 as if he had been borne by her linked senior. Traditionally, a junior linked co-wife who had borne sons that had been taken over by her linked senior might be rewarded for her services by the formation of her own segment, to which she took her youngest son, and the disposition of sons in segments 4 and 11 was in accord with this principle. Another wife of Zwangendaba who was attached to segment 4 was given her own segment 12 (Mkucweni) in which she lived with two linked juniors and other quasi-related dependants. A lieutenant of segment 4 made his own inferior segment 9 (Cikenkheni).

At the next generation level Mpezeni created segment 10 (Loangeni) for his great wife and later established two subsidiary bevies of wives in segments 14 (Fumbeni) and 15 (Cimpinga). Within one of these, segment 14, a junior wife made her own segment 17 (Ngiyelweni) and Mpezeni placed another wife in the headquarters of segment 4, in accordance with the custom by which the heir to any large segment placed one of his wives in the headquarters of that segment. Finally, in each of segments 10 and 11, a lieutenant broke out of the headquarters to found his own segment, namely 13 (Tondweni) and 16 (Fafazeni) respectively. Many other segments, large and small, were created but we have now mentioned all the segments under Mpezeni's control which later became the nuclei of counties in the Native Authority system and whose relative positions are shown in Diagram 1.

8. *Foreign policy*

The Fort Jameson Ngoni are described by pre-conquest travellers as living during the 1890s in a compact area surrounded by a belt of uninhabited country, beyond which were the tribes they raided. It seems probable that this spatial arrangement was not followed consistently throughout their history and that at various times and places the Ngoni came to some agreement with their neighbours whereby they either settled among them or established a settled rule over them. Thus Young, writing of the period 1835-9, says that the Ngoni settled among the Senga (Nsenga). Chibambo, however, says of the same period that the Ngoni 'captured many Senga without difficulty'.[86] The evidence is more definite for the period 1860-80, so far as Mwambera's group is concerned. Chibambo lists the tribes conquered by Mwambera in this period and adds: 'After overcoming them the Ngoni acted wisely; they did not break up local rule, or ways of

[86] Young, *History*, p. 111; Chibambo, *My Ngoni*, p. 22.

1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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631 646 to which some men definitely belonged and others definitely did not. When matters of national importance needed decision, they were discussed at a meeting attended by at least all the lieutenants of the various bevies of the Paramount Chief, and all the spokesmen mentioned in accounts of meetings with Europeans during the later period and who can now be identified belong to this category. It seems possible that the heads of other major segments also took part in these discussions, and that other men listened to them even if they did not take part.

643 627 644 The role played in tribal affairs by brothers and junior sons of the Paramount Chief is not clear. The Paramount Chief did not himself actively intervene in many domestic matters until they were specifically referred to him by his lieutenants, and it seems possible that within their own segments other members of the royal house behaved in the same manner. At least nowadays some aristocratic headmen, not necessarily members of the royal family, behave in this aloof way. The head of the segment, like the head of the [622] village, represents its common interest, its unity, and cannot inter- [624] vene on his own initiative in the affairs of his people. He lies beyond the reach of their quarrels and disputes, and has to be brought into or informed of them in his judicial capacity by his lieutenants. Wiese says that previously members of the royal house were the real governors and judges in their segments, but that by 1891 in three cases out of four effective power had passed to their lieutenants and that they were merely 'show chiefs'.[23] This observation appears to confirm the thesis that with increased segmentation effective control passed from the head of the primal segment to the heads of the inferior segments within it, leaving the head of the primal segment as ceremonial head; but we do not know what evidence if any Wiese had about earlier conditions. It seems probable that before Wiese's time, as well as during it, the heads of large segments ruled through, as well as with the approval of, their lieutenants. So strongly does this principle still apply to the office of Paramount [579] Chief that when recently a brawl began at a beer party attended by the Chief, he at once ran away, lest in the mêlée he might be forced to take direct action.[24]

621 631 Thus we see that in the Ngoni residential system, although segments were enduring social groups and the pattern of relationships once laid down could not be altered in formal terms, yet in fact there was a continual movement in the disposition of political

[23] Wiese, 'Expedição', p. 470.

[24] Gluckman reports similar conditions among the Lozi, where there is a maxim, 'The chief is not a policeman'. See his 'Lozi of North-Western Rhodesia'.

1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

among the Ngoni. Thus the device of perpetual kinship among the Yao, by which the holders of certain chiefly offices stand in relation to one another in a fixed arrangement of kinship positions, of Paramount Chief to son and to sister's son and to brother,[83] would seem to be an example of what is essentially the same process as that by which the dominant lineage in one part of Nuerland is conceived of as descended from a brother of the founding ancestor of another dominant lineage. Where a political relationship is expressed in terms of the connexion between husband and wife, rather than between brothers' or sisters' sons, we may find that a woman is used to embody the political relationship, and she then plays what is essentially a political role. The many wives of the Ngoni Paramount Chief were clearly used in roles of this kind. Not only were they rapporteurs for the Chief, as Deare points out,[84] but they were also living symbols of the political relationship between their segments and the State as a whole. Another central African example of this is the Lele institution of 'wife of the village' by which a village, as a group, may stand as daughter's husband or wife's parent to its chief.[85]

Wherever political relationships of this kind are embodied in persons who have private lives of their own, be they queens or sons-in-law of the village, there is bound to be some domestic and inter-personal relationship alongside the corresponding political relationship. But that should not obscure from us the essentially political role played by individuals in these positions. The analogy with the dynastic marriages of Western Europe is clear.

One of the characteristics of lineage systems and of the Ngoni residential system is that the transition from the ties of domesticity and close kinship to purely political relations is a gradual one. The same principles of organization apply at all levels, and it is gradually with the passage of time and with increasing structural separation and internal segmentation that inter-personal relations are replaced by those between groups, and actions based on sentiments of love and hate give way to those based ultimately on an appeal to force. Relations between the larger segments of a lineage, although expressed in the idiom of kinship, and although possibly explainable historically in kinship terms, are relations between political units, whereas the relationship between brothers living under the same roof is not governed by political considerations. The critical point at which relationships of increasing scale become dominantly

[83] Mitchell, 'Social organization of the Yao'
[84] Deare, 'Slave raiders', 27 April.
[85] Tew, 'Polyandry among the Lele'

The *inkosi* was all this time as if he were mourning and fasting. He was in the house. His body was painted with medicines, black, red and white; and round his loins was painted with black medicine. He was kept naked except for the cover of his foreskin. They fed him with the first-fruits mixed with medicines. They said that both the Paramount and all the people were fasting and under discipline at that time.

When the time for closing the *incwala* came, they again took the fruit *igumuzo* and threw it in among the dancers and called out '*incwala seiniwayiwa*', 'the *incwala* is closed'. Then the people began to separate and to go home, still with the songs on their lips, and on the way cutting juicy stalks of new maize and picking leaves of pumpkins, which meant that the new crops were set free.

These two fragments of the old *incwala* songs, which, like the war songs, were full of 'sounds' like *zi zi*, *ozi ya*, were the only ones preserved. They were known only by one or two old men among the northern and central Ngoni.

1. He comes the one who hates the chief.
   Did you not see him?
   You have seen him.

2. You who are rejected
   They are carrying him lightly
   To thrash him
   He, the stiff-necked one.

The Royal Shadow

The special relationship between a new *inkosi* of the Maseko clan and a member of the Ngoxo clan was personal and individual. I have translated it as 'royal shadow', since in discussing the relationship with leading members of the Ngoxo, Nzunga and Phungwako clans the word *mthunzi* was the one most frequently used. *Mthunzi* is the term used for the shadow of a person or object cast by the sun; also for shade from the sun; also in modern phraseology for a photograph, when it is generally used in its double form, *mthunzithunzi*. In the descriptions of this relationship there seemed almost a reluctance to use a definite term. The informants kept on saying that the Ngoxo boy *was mongo mthunzi*, like a shadow. While they enumerated the many things he did *with* the Paramount, they avoided giving him or his relationship any specific name.

This relationship began at the accession of a new Paramount and lasted until his death when the Ngoxo man leaped on to the funeral pyre, and it was marked by certain special features. On the death of the old Paramount, and before the new Paramount was given the medicine for strengthening him, a boy of the Ngoxo clan was sent 'to enter the chieftainship' with the Paramount. Many cattle from the herd belonging to the big house were given to the Ngoxo family from whom the boy

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came, 'to quieten them'. Thereafter this Ngoxo boy did everything with the Paramount. He began by washing with the royal medicine at the time of the accession. He drank beer with him, he ate with him, he 'stood with him' (*amaima naye*) on all important occasions, such as sending out the army and judging cases. He slept in his own hut which was in the *cigodlo*, where the Paramount's sons built, and when he married he built huts for his wives in that same section of the royal village. At the death of the Paramount, he danced the war-dance in full war-dress and leaped on to the pyre to perish with the dead Paramount in the flames.

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Informants sometimes said of this Ngoxo boy that he was 'of one blood' with the Maseko clan. They described the relationship between the two clans as that of *cibale*, brotherhood, which excluded all possibility of inter-marriage. Between the Paramount and the Ngoxo boy was established a joking relationship, so that the Ngoxo boy could say 'good and bad things to the Paramount'.

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It was clear that the ritual and social aspects of this relationship complemented and supported each other. The recurrent emphasis on the taking of medicine at the accession, on the participation in the war medicines, and most of all on the death on the Paramount's funeral pyre, were all evidence of this ritual relationship. Informants repudiated any idea of a scapegoat which involved protecting the Paramount from poison by eating before him. They reiterated several times that the Ngoxo boy did not eat *before* the Paramount; in fact he ate after him though sharing his food dishes. Surrounding the Paramount were other boys called *micetho*, who performed the duties of pages or personal servants. The Ngoxo boy was always distinct from them, and the distinction lay in the combined ritual and social relationship.

The concept of a 'shadow' was of something very close to a person, almost indistinguishable from the person himself. In referring to the Ngoxo boy in the terms 'he was as the shadow of the *inkosi*; he was as himself', informants emphasized the extreme closeness of the tie between the two men. It seemed as if the royal shadow existed to meet a need for strengthening the Paramount by giving him a second self. It emphasized also the dangerous sphere of life and action in which the Paramount lived, due to the medicines he had used, his powers to protect the land and its fertility, and his power to give strength to the army through the use of the *tonga* medicine. No one else in the royal family shared these dangers and there was inherent in the relationship of royal shadow to *inkosi* the sense of some security through a companionship where protective medicines were shared as well as the hazardous occasions for which they gave protection.

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This intense and dangerous ritual relationship was buttressed by the social ties binding the Ngoxo boy to the Paramount. We have seen that between them as individuals there was that freedom of a joking

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relationship, described in terms of brotherhood, and this brotherhood was further emphasized by the ban on inter-marriage between the Ngoso and Maseko clans. The significance of the Ngoso boy, when he became a man, building in the *cigodlo* where the Paramount's sons built, was often stressed by informants. Though his huts were in this *cigodlo* section of the royal village, as if he were a son of the Paramount's family, the Paramount never said 'child' to him but invariably 'brother'.

In all the occasions of daily life, as well as in those of special ritual significance, the Ngoso boy stood or sat next to the Paramount. The Ngoni insisted that the status of a man or woman should be expressed in terms of sitting or standing in order of precedence. Sitting or standing next to the Paramount implied that that individual had the highest possible social status. The leading members of the Ngoso clan in their villages displayed an awareness of their social prestige which was very noticeable. This high rank was, however, in the past bought with a price —that of sharing in the dangers of the Paramountcy. This was acknowledged through the gift of cattle to the boy's family, sent at the time when he 'entered the chieftainship' with the Paramount.

The institution of the royal shadow came to an end with the advent of the Europeans. An Ngoso man acted as a royal shadow on the accession of Cikusi but did not die on his funeral pyre. When Cikusi's son Gomani I was installed as *inkosi*, an Ngoso boy 'entered the chieftainship' with him and stood with him 'in the smoke of the *tanga*' when the army went to war. It was this Gomani I who was killed by the British, and there was no royal ritual at this death, and no cremation in a stream in which the Ngoso boy could share. The royal shadow retired in those troubled days to his father's village, where he died in 1937. It was alleged that no Ngoso man stood in this relationship to Gomani II, either at his accession, which took place during the period of Direct Rule, or in 1933 when his Paramount Chieftaincy was recognized. Informants showed a certain hesitation in answering direct questions on this topic, which was attributable partly to the fact that the Paramount was a Christian, and partly to a reluctance to discuss the continued use of 'royal medicines'. The following account of the royal shadow was given by informants of the Nzunga and Ngoso clans.

« When the Paramount entered the chieftainship he stood with a man *from the Ngoso clan. The Ngoso people are called* with the Paramount, because they stand together when entering the chieftainship. When the Paramount of the Maseko dies, he dies together with one of the Ngoso. It was so when there died Ngwana, Mputa, Cikusi.

When the Ngoni came into this country they stopped killing an Ngoso man when the Paramount died. When the Paramount died a young man of the Ngoso clan just stood beside the body of the Paramount, and when making the funeral pyre of the Paramount, he also was there until they set fire to it. If anyone wanted to kill an Ngoso man by the

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water and the pyre, he was refusing, saying 'No, not in these days, but formerly.'

When Magona Ngoxo was with Cikusi he was staying with him in the daytime. Magona had his own huts and Cikusi his. When eating, Cikusi ate alone, but afterwards he gave food to Magona. When Cikusi was washing it was together with Magona. When he went to the bush, they went together. When Cikusi was washing with the *tongo*, he was doing it with Magona. When the warriors were going out, Cikusi and Magona stood together, and they made fire for the medicines and they stood together in the smoke and then the warriors went out. So, when mentioning Magona, they said: 'the shadow of Cikusi'. When they were eating in the *bpalo*, the *nsima* (porridge) was brought to Cikusi, but if some *alumuxana* came, the wives of Magona cooked *nsima* and gave it to the *alumuxana*. When Cikusi died, Magona could take his wives if he wanted. The Ngoxo man could tell the Paramount anything, good or bad, and stay like the mouth of the Paramount.

When the Paramount died formerly, the Ngoxo man dressed in his war-dress. When he came near the fire he danced with the shield in his hand. When the fire blazed up he ran and jumped on the fire. So the Maseko people gave cattle to the Ngoxo people, to quieten their hearts because they were brothers. And when another Paramount was installed they gave an Ngoxo man to stand with him. The father of the man who died with the Paramount received cattle and villages to rule over and gifts. The Paramounts gave cattle because they said: 'Since our brother is going to stand with the Paramount, if that Paramount dies, he also will be killed, so the Paramount ought to give cattle like *lobola* so they may quieten the hearts of his brothers.' Though these cattle are not given for a woman but for a man, any Maseko man ought not to marry an Ngoxo woman because there is this brotherhood.

And this man of the Ngoxo clan was like a chief because he had men to manage his affairs at his door, as did the Paramount. And if he died his funeral was like that of a chief. But the day the Paramount died the Ngoxo man was killed. When the Paramount washed with medicines, he was washing with the Ngoxo man. When drinking beer, he was drinking in the same hut as the Paramount. When the Paramount was sacrificing he was together with the Ngoxo man, and they did not leave each other.

The Ngoxo people have a thanking name (*isibongo*) Maphonya. It is they who were standing with the Paramounts, and the Ngoxo people were in the section of Ziyembe. Their avoidances were the same as all the Ngoni, especially fish and elephant. When Cikusi died Gulo stood with Gomani when he entered the chieftainship. Gulo was the son of Magona.

The royal village and the daily routine of the Paramount

In Part I, Chapter II we referred to the process by which each Paramount, after his accession, went out from his father's village to build his own. The Ngoni called this *ukupamisa inkosi* (to send out the Paramount) and the term used for the new village, *lusungulu* (the needle), was said to signify 'the front village where you expect to find the Paramount'.

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Dr. Kuper described the Swazi king making his own capital, but referred also to the existence of several royal villages where the wives of the reigning king lived.[1] The Ngoni system of one royal village which went out from the former royal village resulted in a series of social groups, based on residence, which were related to past Paramounts and their widows and to present Paramounts and their wives. The diagram in Chapter III of Part I shows a very much simplified form of the component parts of a new royal village and their relationship illustrated by the siting of the huts.

The following text was given by an elderly widow of a grandson of Zwangendaba, in the head village of Chief Mperembe in the northern kingdom.

"When a new village, *lusengulu*, was built the *indlunkulu* was first erected and then followed all the other huts of the *inkosi* in order. Those huts which belonged to the *indlunkulu* took the right-hand side facing the kraal. The second house took the left-hand side, and all huts belonging to this one followed it. Such huts could be counted as belonging to the *indlunkulu* and the second house by the cattle that were taken from such houses. To marry a new wife, if the *inkosi* took cattle from the right-hand house that new wife would belong there. All the huts of each house of the *inkosi* were built at the back of the hut of the owner of that house.

When erecting huts, those of the *izinduna* came next and were built next to those of the *inkosi*. After that they built their own according to their *izigawa* or divisions.

All the huts at the back of the *indlunkulu* and behind the other huts were called *cigodlo*. Huts near the gate of the kraal at the left were called *kwa cikulu*.

This text brings out the fact that each new royal village had three main elements in it: the mothers of the Paramount, his wives, and the *izinduna* and their families. The Paramount was always accompanied to his new village by one or more wives of his father, *ukulondolosa mntwana* (to keep the son). One of these was usually his own mother and she occupied the *indlunkulu*. The text points out that the big wife of the Paramount was on the right of the *indlunkulu*, and closely associated with its owner, the Paramount's mother.

There was no fixed rule for the number of *izinduna* in charge of the houses of the Paramount's mothers and wives. When the Ngoni kingdoms were established in Nyasaland, the royal villages were very large and the divisions of the village, called in the text *izigawa*, were small hamlets. Each division was generally identified with a house, and in that case the *induna* in charge of the house was also in charge of the division. The original composition of royal villages could only be reconstructed by tracing the relationships of separate villages in the 1930's to their former parent village. This will be illustrated in the next chapter on the

[1] Kuper, H. op. cit. p. 41.

643 361 royal women. In the royal villages in the 1930's there was one big *induna* and several lesser ones whose position and functions will be described in Chapter IV.

643 554 644 This 'going out' of the new Paramount's village, leaving the former Paramount's village as the *gogo* village, brought about some re-distribution of authority, prestige and material goods. It gave the new Paramount his own village, always to be known as his, even after his death. His village became the focal meeting-place for the territory and for the court and territorial officials who surrounded the Paramount; and it was to the new royal village that the *akumuzana* in pre-European days came frequently to visit the Paramount and report to him on conditions in their areas. His moving out of the *gogo* village, on the other hand, gave his brothers who stayed there, and especially those of the *gogo* house, more freedom and authority within that village as well as responsibility for the conduct of all ritual matters relating to the kingdom. The Paramount's big wife had to take her place as the leading woman in the new village and to order the affairs of the wives attached to her house in consultation with the Paramount's mother. Cattle, beer and food for the royal household became the concern of the new village, and the *izinduna* and the royal women had to plan and manage the economy of a capital where political interests converged and where visitors and hangers-on were constantly turning up.

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643 644 512 The following text by Chief Mtwalo Jere in Mzimba district, helped by Cibambo's older brother, describes the daily routine of the Paramount and his royal village as they had known it in their youth before the coming of the Europeans:

¶ The *inkosi* had to wash very early before the people came to see him. The *ingceko* was the servant who took care of washing the *inkosi*. He had to go with the *inkosi* to the bush and hide the faeces to prevent any bad person from getting the faeces. The *ingceko* was anyone whom the *inkosi* called for this, and must be one who walks well with the *inkosi*.

Before leaving his house to go to the kraal the *inkosi* had to eat a little porridge. When he went to the kraal a calabash of beer was brought to him. When any beer was brought to the *inkosi*, the *ingceko* tasted it first to see if it was good. The *inkosi* asked 'Is it good beer?' and the *ingceko* said 'Yes *inkosi*' and gave it to the *inkosi* to drink. When the *inkosi* took snuff the big *akumuzana* could beg from him. The other *amadoda* could only touch their noses. Then the *inkosi* knew they were begging snuff from him. Where the *inkosi* sat a mat was spread, and on it was laid a leopard- or a lion-skin. This was called 'the chair of the *inkosi*'. On arrival the big *akumuzana* went straight into the kraal to where the *inkosi* sat and greeted him '*Bayete*', and sat down in front of him.

The *inkosi* could not eat porridge except that cooked by his own wives. In his own hut he ate alone with one wife to serve him. His mothers also came with food every day. He ate twice in his own hut, early and late, and once in the kraal. When he ate in the kraal all could see him. He could

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not eat so much as other people. He must leave enough for others or he would be ashamed. He would take a few lumps of porridge from one wooden dish (*ingcwembe*) and then hand the other dishes to those around him. Each day one beast had to be killed from the house of each wife of the *inkosi* in turn. It was their food and they could not cease killing. The *inkosi* had his own great garden. After hoeing the *induna* of the *indlunkulu* called all the village people to come and plant these gardens first before their own. They did this because if a man was hungry, he went to the *inkosi* and said 'I am hungry' and he was given food to eat.

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In this account it is clear that the daily life of the Paramount had both private and public aspects. In private he was vulnerable to attacks from enemies. Hence he depended on the services of a trusted attendant to see that no sorcerers could make bad magic from his excreta; and he ate no food except that prepared by his own wives and mothers. On the other hand, in public he appeared as the generous and ceremonious ruler, providing food, beer and snuff for his visitors, and himself practising that restraint in eating which was characteristic of Ngoni good manners both from host and guest.

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In addition to the daily routine of sharing food with his immediate entourage and chance visitors, the Paramount had special feasts known as *izipheko*. These feasts, as described by Cibambo, were related to the bringing of tribute, thus emphasizing the reciprocal nature of the gifts passing between the people and the Paramount.

¶ Along with the tribute the *inkosi* had his feasts with which he wanted to feed his people. At an appointed time the *inkosi* and his wives and mothers prepared beer and three or four beasts for his men and women. Men ate their meat in the kraal but the women at the *indlunkulu*. All the people thanked him everywhere, including the women, and the men were thanking with dancing. Even although people were not called by the *inkosi*, yet many people came to his village to beg food from the *inkosi*. Also by telling the *izinduna* the *inkosi* would invite people to eat with him, and many would come from far away. The wives of the *inkosi* and his mothers were cooking soft or hard porridge, with different *imbido* (relishes) so that the *inkosi* could give them to his people. They would all be waiting in the kraal. A generous *inkosi* liked to stay in the kraal so that his food should be sent there in order to feed both notable people and poor people. He would be watching whom to give food to.

In this way although there was tribute (*imitulo*), it was not very burdensome. People did not complain to the *inkosi* about it. It was as if they were playing, because of the dancing. Those who had no wealth came to the *inkosi* and begged him to help them. The *inkosi* gave cattle to these people without asking them to pay again, because he said 'The people and the cattle, they are all mine. They are eating each other.'

There was an apparent contradiction here. On the one hand there was true reciprocity, that of the people who brought tribute or gifts and in

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second and third, and the finisher, at the place of dancing in the kraal. At such times each one when called rose and danced *umgiya*, repeating his names. This was called *ukubika izinkalipi*, reporting the heroes or the fierce ones. This is still being done today. The *inkosi* thanked the people who brought the skins by giving them a beast or a goat. When they were dressing the meat and eating it, they kept on dancing *ligubo* and crying the war-cry. At such times the women went along with the men to help them dance *ligulo*. They made the responses to the songs and jerked their necks.

All such things the *inkosi* divided among his houses. The big house had a big share, but especially his mother's house. She should have most. Even if his real mother was dead, the big share had to go there, to her house, where her successor lived.

Visits to the Paramount, whether for a particular occasion or as a matter of routine, were hedged about with ceremonial. It was expected that *akamuzana* and other important people who lived near enough would visit the Paramount frequently and, according to some informants, they went every day in pre-European times.

No one could approach the Paramount except through one of the *izinduna* of the royal village, and the correct person to approach was the *induna* of the *indlunkulu*. Visitors were expected to wait at the gate of the kraal and put down their spears. When they were brought by the *induna* to the Paramount, they greeted him with '*Bayete*'. Then they sat down and the Paramount told the *induna* to greet them, and they replied '*Yebo, inkosi*'. This custom of indirect approach to the Paramount has been maintained. Early travellers in Nyasaland spoke of observing it, and when I was there it was considered outrageous manners on the part of any European if he penetrated immediately to the presence of the Paramount, without going through the accustomed channels.

The Paramount was both greeted and thanked for gifts of food, beer or snuff, with '*Bayete*'. If he moved from the kraal, all present said '*Bayete*'. If anyone had to leave his presence, he crouched low and murmured '*Bayete*' as he went out. Cibambo described this punctilious formality of thanking for gifts in the Ngoni manner.

¶ When receiving presents the Ngoni thanked the giver by taking them with two hands, even though it was a small present. Afterwards they thanked the giver by his *isibongo*, clan name, openly. They said that receiving a thing with one hand showed that you derided it and did not put any value on it. When receiving a present from bigger people or from a chief, some words of respect were added to the *isibongo*, such as '*Baba*', '*Nkosi yami*', '*E-Jere*'. Often the receiver if he was much pleased with the present added some *izitokazo* to the clan name, if he knew them. Those near him or some further away helped the receiver by thanking loudly after him. If what he received was food, he thanked at the beginning, and after eating the food he thanked again. If such a present of food was given to a body of people, the leader in the company first led the others in

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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643 thanking, and then all thundered the thanking together. This included all
644 the rest who were in the neighbourhood though they did not take part in
431 the food or the present. The leader would first thank '*E-Jere*' and then all would follow together, '*E-Jere*', or the clan name of the one who was the giver. The Paramount, if he gave presents to the people, was not thanked by his clan names other people. He was thanked by '*Bayete*' as was done when saluting him. Likewise those who received the title *Nkomo* were thanked by that title when they gave presents to people.

643 On ceremonial occasions, visitors to the royal village heard the
644 *izibongo* or praise-songs of the Paramount. These were songs referring
533 to great deeds and notable incidents both in the lifetime of the reigning
576 Paramount and in the lives of his predecessors. They were distinct from the *izitokozo*, which were honorific epithets added to the clan name and spoken when thanking a well-known man or woman for their gifts. The *izitokozo* could be said by anyone, since each person of note had his own which were well-known. The *izibongo* could only be spoken or sung by an *umbongi* or official 'praiser'. Such a person was a man of good
[826] memory and possessing eloquence. The chest was thought to be the seat of wisdom and eloquence, and a man who composed praise-songs, as distinct from repeating well-known ones, had to have the faculty of finding the right words, since new songs of this kind were generally invented on a sudden inspiration.

The occasions when the praise-songs were recited were when important visitors came to the royal village; when beasts were slaughtered in the ancestor cult or at special dances at the royal village or at the feasts of the Paramount. On such occasions the official praiser stood up in the kraal, everyone kept silence and did not move, and after a pause he began to call out '*Bayabonga inkosi*', 'let us praise the Paramount'. In repeating the praise-songs he began with those of the immediate ancestor of the Paramount, and then went on to those of earlier ancestors. At the end he shouted '*Bayete*' and all the people replied '*Bayete*'. Examples of the praise-songs of Zwangendaba and his father Hlacwayo of the northern kingdom and of Ngwana, father of Mputa, of the central Ngoni kingdom are given at the end of the chapter.

643 The tension caused by the extreme formality in the behaviour of the
644 Paramount, his courtiers and his visitors was lightened by the presence
522 of a court jester. Informants were agreed that such an individual was usually present to amuse the Paramount with his sallies and gestures and clown-like tumbling about. Dr. Laws referred to such a jester at the court of Mbelwa I when the Livingstonia Mission was making its first settlement in northern Ngoniland.[1] I saw a jester who came with Paramount Zintambira Maseko from Portuguese territory when he and his officials visited Mcakhatha for the war-dance at the mourning for Bambo

[1] Livingstone, W. P. *Laws of Livingstonia*. London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1921, p. 200.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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643 644 522

Manga. It was a time of great emotional tension and strain, and the absurdities of the jester relieved the solemnity and formality of the visit. This jester was said by informants to be a man of the Moyo clan, who owed his position not to hereditary right but to a ready and witty tongue.

The death of the Paramount

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It is in the ceremonies at the death of the Paramount that we find some major differences between the traditional practices of the northern and central Ngoni peoples, which might be attributed to the separate groups in Natal from which they came. I was living in Mcakatha village in the central kingdom at the time of the sickness and death of Bambo Manga, the most important of the royal women among the central Ngoni. The ritual ceremonies at her funeral were said to be almost identical with those at the death of the Paramount, and I was able to check details of similarity and difference with old men who remembered the death of Cikusi, the last Ngoni Paramount in the central kingdom for whom the full ritual was carried out. I was not able after that to pursue further possible parallels and differences among the northern Ngoni. My general impression from informants was that among the northern Ngoni the ritual at the death of a Paramount differed from that of any other prominent man only in certain details of the period and form of mourning. Among the central Ngoni, as Rattray said in a note on the text which will be given, 'such funerals were more of a military pageant than anything else. All outward signs of grief were rigorously excluded.' I can confirm that from my observations at the death of Bambo Manga.

[152]

When the Paramount became ill, a diviner was called to give advice. He might advise that a sacrifice should be made to the ancestor spirits. He might suggest witchcraft as the cause of illness. He might advise calling in a man to give medicine to the Paramount. When, in spite of sacrifices and treatment, the Paramount died, the announcement was made from the edge of his village: *Izulu lidilikile*, 'the heaven has fallen down'. Messengers were sent to all the chiefs and to all the *alumuzana* and other leading men. From the edge of each central village the cry was made, and each chief and *mulumuzana* sent his messengers to make the same announcement in each of the villages under him.

[791]

Among the northern Ngoni the actual ceremony of burial does not appear to have been very different from that of any other important man, with one exception, that the Paramount, like other ruling Jere chiefs, was buried at the edge of the cattle kraal in a circular pit of the kind used when digging clay for mudding houses, on one side of which there was a niche where the corpse was placed in a sitting position, facing south-east. This burying in a circular grave on the edge of the kraal was the procedure which I witnessed at the burial of Bambo Manga among the central Ngoni (see below p. 75).

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Dr. Steele, one of the early medical missionaries in northern Ngoniland, was present at the burial of Mbelwa I and left an account of it which is quoted by Dr. Elmslie.[1] He spoke of the great crowds of men coming to mourn armed with spears and shields, and some with guns. They came in companies, as if they were the military bands coming for mobilization from the head villages. They marched first with their shields held high over their heads, and then laid them down and clasped their hands behind their heads, advancing towards and retreating from the grave and keeping up a continuous mourning cry of '*Baba be*'. Three days elapsed between the death and the burial. During that time two graves were dug, in order that all the Paramount's possessions might be buried with him or beside him. When the graves were ready, the kraal was cleared of all but the married men who had the head-ring. Meantime the wives of the Paramount, carrying his shields, were advancing towards the grave and retreating, a few steps at a time. They finally went back to their houses, dressed themselves in skins, and returned in single file on their hands and knees. They withdrew as the corpse was brought out and placed in the grave, and other women came with the Paramount's possessions, such as pipes, wooden head-rests and shields, and all were put into the graves. The men stood in circles round the graves with their shields over their heads.

Among the central Ngoni Rattray recorded an account of the funeral rites of Cikusi in 1891, which I was able to check with more than one old man who had been present. There was also the funeral of Bambo Manga which I witnessed in 1937, where the ritual followed was identical with that described by the old men for the Paramount Cikusi, with one exception: that her possessions but not her body were cremated by a stream.

The chief differences between the northern and central Ngoni in the funeral rites at the death of the Paramount were that the central Ngoni Paramounts of the Maseko clan were cremated and not buried, and there was no public mourning, but instead a series of war-dances. There were two other distinctive features among the central Ngoni: formerly the individual known as the 'royal shadow' died with the Paramount; and from the time of the actual death to the time of the cremation there was a period of licence and lawlessness called *ciponde*. This latter phenomenon may have existed among the northern Ngoni, but I did not ask about it specifically when I was there, and I did not hear it referred to. I was made aware of it forcibly at the death of Bambo Manga when my cook and houseboy immediately dumped all their possessions in my hut as the only safe place during the time of *ciponde*. Rattray's account of the death of Cikusi also mentioned this practice.

[644] [786]

In the traditions of the central Ngoni it was recorded that only the Maseko Paramounts in the direct line were cremated, and not the

[1] Elmslie, W. A. op. cit. p. 270.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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142 565 surroundings, their families, and the behaviour of those for whom they were responsible was most noticeable. Not all of these women were in the category of royal women, nor did all the royal women conform to this distinctive physical type, though the association of high-ranking family, physical appearance and pride of bearing was striking.

644 565 There were three main classes of royal women, all associated with the Paramount in a special relationship. These showed some parallels with the classes of royal women among the Swazi described by Dr. Kuper. I have not adopted her terms for distinguishing them, with the exception of the term Queen Mother, which I have used in the English sense of the widow of a former ruler and mother of the existing ruler. The chief women associated with the Paramount in the Ngoni kingdoms were the Royal Sister, the Queen Mother, and the big wife. This same association of three leading women with a ruling chief or *muhumuzana* was found in the subordinate chieftainships under the Paramount, and in the head villages of the Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans. It was a definite Ngoni pattern, associating women of high rank with the men who carried political responsibility. Their positions in the Ngoni patrilineal and virilocal social structure was markedly different from the position of the leading women in the matrilineal and uxorilocal societies of other Nyasaland peoples, especially in their relationship to their husbands, sons and brothers.

644 593 The relationships of the Queen Mother and the big wife to the Paramount were of a different character from that of the Royal Sister to her brother, since she was of the royal clan and they were not. We shall first consider the position in the Ngoni kingdoms of the Queen Mother and the big wife, since reference has been made to them already in the previous chapter. In the new *husungulu* village of the Paramount there was a close connexion between the Queen Mother, who moved out with him, and his own big wife. His big wife was of the same house as the Queen Mother, since the cattle for her *lobola* had been taken from the herd of the Queen Mother. At this time of moving out into the new village the big wife began to be head of her own house. Other wives, married with cattle from the herd which had been built up for her, and kraaled with those belonging to the Queen Mother, were attached to her house, and their huts were built near her own. She was the mother, actual or potential, of the future Paramount. If she failed to have a male child, or if her sons died, a male child would be taken from another wife's hut and brought up in her hut and would be known as the child of her house. Since she was the mother of the heir she had a special relationship to the *induna* appointed to look after her house. It was the house of the Paramount elect and also she would probably, when the Queen Mother died, succeed to the ownership of the *indlunkulu* hut. Her *induna* would then become one of the most important men in the village as he would receive all guests and strangers.

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When the Queen Mother, who had in her husband's lifetime been the big wife of his village and the head of his big house, moved out with her son to his *kuungulu* village, she had the unrivalled distinction of occupying the *indlunkulu*. While her hut was the centre of all hospitality and of ceremonials such as marriages and funerals, she was aware that her daughter-in-law, her son's big wife, was the leading lady of that village by right of being the Paramount's big wife and the mother of his heir. Such a situation could have produced friction between the big wife and the Queen Mother, but informants were shocked at the idea of two women in such positions not being able to control their tempers and adjust any differences which arose. I never saw any visible signs of friction. The Queen Mother and her co-widows in the village seemed aware that their time of active participation in royal village or national affairs was over, and the Queen Mother appeared content to occupy the *indlunkulu*, provide a meeting-place for all the women, and give advice and counsel when invited to do so. Part of her duty in occupying the *indlunkulu* hut was to keep the ritual vessels for sacrificing to the ancestral spirit of her late husband, the former Paramount, and when the sequence of ceremonies after his death had been completed, she looked after his spirit which had been 'brought back' to that hut.

In the central kingdom, when the Paramount Mputa died in Tanganyika, a regent took care of the kingdom while his son Cikusi was a minor. During that period the royal village built by Domwe mountain was a very large one divided into hamlets. The position of Queen Mother was then held by NaMlangeni, formerly the big wife of Mputa, who had a daughter Manga, but no son. A son, Cikusi, born to the next wife, was put into the house of NaMlangeni and brought up there. Golozela Nzunga, the *induna* in charge of her house, was also in charge of the section of the royal village called Ziyembe. When the royal village divided, its constituent hamlets spread out from Domwe and the section called Ziyembe moved to the east towards the escarpment. The head village of the Nzunga clan was built there, and Golozela continued as *induna* for NaMlangeni. She went with him, while Cikusi's own mother went into his *kuungulu* village in the section called Liwisini sited near the Kirk Range. NaMlangeni took care of the spirit of Paramount Mputa in the Nzunga clan head village of Mcakatha. Her hut in that village was the *indlunkulu* and after she died her daughter Manga came to live in that hut and look after her father's spirit.

This brief account of the succession of a Queen Mother in the central kingdom brings up the question of succession, which was a vital element in the office of the Queen Mother, in respect both of her occupancy of the *indlunkulu* and her guardianship of the spirit of the dead Paramount. In the case of a successor to the Queen Mother of a recently deceased Paramount, two alternatives were open. The reigning Paramount's big wife could succeed to the *indlunkulu* and to the

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644 guardianship of his father's spirit, or she could take over the *indlunkulu* while a co-widow of the Queen Mother inherited the guardianship of the spirit in her own hut. The second alternative was the one followed in all the instances remembered by informants. In both kingdoms the spirits of the main line of the Paramounts were guarded by someone appointed to that task, chosen on the grounds of reputation and reliability. There was yet another variant in the central kingdom, where, as we have seen, it was Manga, the daughter of Mputa, who succeeded to her mother's guardianship of his spirit. The one principle which emerged from a number of cases cited in both kingdoms, was that occupancy of the *indlunkulu* and guardianship of a spirit might be undertaken by the same person, but generally it did not work out that way.

The Royal Sister, a title equivalent to the English Princess Royal, was the older full sister of the Paramount by the same mother, or his older sister by his father's big wife if she had borne no son. She was always referred to as 'the one who would have been chief if she had been a man'. She stood in a special relationship to the reigning Paramount and to the Paramount-elect. She was in constant touch with the Paramount's children who used the name *dadakazi* (female father) when addressing her or referring to her. Dr. Kuper [1] reported that the Royal Sister among the Swazi was addressed by the same term, and that she came next in rank to the big wife and the leading wives. My informants and my own observations in both Ngoni kingdoms put the Royal Sister next to the big wife and before the other wives. She visited the royal village at frequent intervals to see her brother and his children, and was consulted about their affairs. She took a leading part in the puberty ritual for the daughters of her brother and was prominent at *ligubo* and other dances, and at mourning ceremonies. She was married with an exchange of cattle to a man of a leading Swazi or trans-Zambesi clan, and during his lifetime lived in his village, visiting the royal village often.

[601]

565 644 631 The position of the royal women in the Ngoni kingdoms has been discussed in terms of the sister, mother and big wife of the Paramount. The same relationships were found in the families of the chiefs and *alumuzana*. There the equivalent of the Royal Sister was the older full sister by the same mother of the chief or *mulumuzana*, and his own big wife and his father's big wife played similar roles, within their own spheres, to those played in the Paramount's village by the Queen Mother and his big wife.

Five texts follow which illustrate the life and activities of leading women who filled roles equivalent to those of Royal Sister, big wife and Queen Mother. One of the texts is by a Royal Sister—Bambo Manga, who was the sister of Paramount Cikusi in the central kingdom. Margaret Jere was the elder full sister of the heir to the chieftanship of

[1] Kuper, H. op. cit. p. 59.

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Chief Mtwalo II in the northern kingdom. Two texts are by former big wives of leading men. NyaNsangu was the former big wife of a grandson of Zwangendaba, a member of the royal clan but not a chief, though he owned many villages. NaNdumbu was the former big wife of the head of the Nzunga clan in the central kingdom. The last text by Cibambo gives details of the clothes worn by royal women and leading women in pre-European days, some of which were still in use in the 1930's.

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Life of the Royal Women
by Manga Maseko

daughter of Mputa, former Paramount of the central kingdom

159 565

¶ Formerly I was just staying for I did not work. I had many slaves and their work was especially to thread beads. Up to today I have not worked except to cook. Our hair was anointed with the fat of cows and of milk. Our food was milk and we drank it in a wooden cup. We were getting cloth when they sold slaves to the Arabs. For honouring each other, the big men were telling the youths: 'You should honour the big people that the country may be rich.' Only the big women were dancing *ngoma*, *msindo* and *ligubo*. If a man married the child of a chief, he gave many cattle, and the poor man could not marry the child of a chief.

631 644 [302] [263]

When NaMlangeni was alive she was a well-known chief and was greatly honoured. When speaking a case, they called her that she might judge. When people went to war and captured slaves and cattle they were giving them to her, and she divided them. For thanking her they said: '*Zaithwa Mai.*'

Life of the Royal Women
by Margaret Jere

granddaughter of Mtwalo I, daughter of Johanne Jere in the northern kingdom

¶ When I was a child I was not allowed to go out quickly in the sun, and when crawling I had to stay in the house. I was very light coloured. The *mlezi* (nurse girl) took me to my mother, UNsulazi Nzima, to be suckled at special times. I slept in the house of Magodise Moyo, my grandmother, who was the widow of Chief Mtwalo. The *isidandani* (attendant) also slept there. My grandmother and others, the *manina* (senior women), were telling me how to behave. A special *isidandani* living in Magodise's house was told by my grandmother to speak specially to me when I had reached puberty. This *isidandani* could speak to me about anything. When nearing marriage a woman was chosen, Hlamseya Nzima, and sent to reveal to me how I was to live in my married state. The sisters of my father, Tinxira and Sayeya Jere, also came and spoke to me at the time of my marriage. Hlamseya Nzima was sent by my grandmother to examine me (for virginity) before marriage. I was allowed to play with those children who lived in the same section of the village and who were known to my mother and grandmother. The *isidandani* did all the work but sometimes I used to pound and fetch water, but not too hard and just for pleasure.

When strangers came, I came and saluted them and then went out of

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159 the house. If my father came to my mother's house, I would go out, but
565 if he sent for me I would return and he would talk to me and play with
631 me. We learned how to behave well, and were rebuked if we behaved
644 badly. My father would beat a child for not behaving well. My father did not allow his children to be spoiled by being treated differently from others. He said: 'They are all my children.'

Life of the Royal Women
by Mdingase Nsangu

widow of Chinombo Jere, grandson of Zwangendaba in the northern kingdom

565 ¶ The *amakosikazi* were not working. During the day they kept dressing
631 their hair, both the young women and the old. The old women no longer
644 kept their *isihlutu*, or high chignon, but wore the *umzoco*, or long curls.
[302] For the *umzoco* the hair was cut short and not allowed to grow very long. Instead of dressing it upwards they took a blade of grass and kept it pressed down after oil and scent were applied. Their other work was to go to the river and wash.

They also drank beer and some gruel, and afterwards danced *ngoma* in the house where beer was brewed. The men and chief also joined in the *ngoma* and the women were responding to the singing. They began to drink in the morning until the afternoon, but not in the evening. Other people went on drinking until evening, and even some of the *amakosikazi* who were *isidli* (gluttonous) but the rest were sleeping or resting.

When drinking in the house the chief always sat by the right-hand door-post, and the big *inkosikazi* by the left-hand post. They sat near the door to draw breath easily because there were many people inside. The beer-pot being set halfway between the door and the hearth-stones in the centre, a man was chosen to pour the beer in the gourds for drinking. He was *umtele wocwala*, the beer pourer, and was often the village *induna* or one who was favoured by the chief. When the gourds were full he told the chief, and the chief told him to distribute them. Sometimes there were four or even six for the different classes in the house. They sat in order, the *inkosi* with the *izinduna* and *amadoda*, and the *inkosikazi* with the other wives of the chief and the wives of the *izinduna* and *amadoda*. The chief and the *inkosikazi* kept on inviting the common people to come and drink.
[576] Such invited people thanked the person at the beginning and at the end, others joining him. The *inkosikazi* or other wives of the chief were thanked '*Nkomo*'.

The *amakosikazi* never worked at all, but the lesser wives worked, and pounded grain and fetched firewood. These were the ones who had not yet got attendants in their houses. All the chief *amakosikazi* had attendants who performed all the work of the house. The *amakosikazi* often sat in the verandah or outside under the platform of branches supported by posts.
[262] There they ate their food which was *ilambazi* and *umnjinji*, thick gruel of millet; *isinkwa se nyauti*, bulrush millet ground to a paste; or *isinkobe*, whole grains of maize boiled and pounded. The meat was eaten as a feast on the *egcekeni*, the smeared place in front of the house, and all the chief's wives joined in. A mat was spread for the big *amakosikazi* where they sat

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when eating meat. The lesser wives sat on the ground, which was cleaned and smeared often with cow's dung.

The second *induna* of the village was the one who put the meat on the *ingwenshe*, or big platter of the *inkosikazi*, and placed it before her. She herself or her *shlanzi* (co-wife) divided the meat for the other women, the wife of the *induna* helping her. After they had eaten, each *inkosikazi* called for an *ingwenshe* from her house for the meat to be given to her attendants.

The Life of the Royal Women
by NaNdumbu

formerly the big wife of the late Chief Njolomole Nxunga I in the central kingdom

¶ Old Njolomole had many wives, great and small. His huts were well made, and in the middle was the 'big house'. They made a fence to go round all the huts, and its appearance was very good.

He was fond of sitting on the *bwalo*, and all his wives cooked *nsima* and took many baskets to the *bwalo*. He himself ate alone, but afterwards gave food to the big people and they in turn to the children who were waiting on the *bwalo*. If a stranger came, he did not lack food, for the chief gave food to strangers and beer. So all strangers praised his behaviour. And he was known far and wide in the land for his comely behaviour.

When the days for *ngoma* were near he was going to the stores to buy many cloths to divide them to all his wives. Especially he was giving them to NaNdumbu his big wife to divide. Those cloths were all of one kind. On the day of dancing *ngoma* all the women wore these cloths and came on the *bwalo* with the chief. The people were astonished to see the women dressed alike. Njolomole excelled among all the people, and all praised him.

In the hut of NaNdumbu there were girls to sweep and to pound, and NaNdumbu was just sitting, no pounding for her.

Njolomole was very fond of hunting and when he killed animals in the hunt he divided them among his wives. Then he died and left his wives. From that time his wives have been very poor, and some have gone away to their own homes. Those who are here have been married by other men. Although the men dance *ngoma*, those women cannot dance it because they were greatly praised when they danced with fine cloths, but they cannot dance with poor cloths, no. So when people dance they just look on. Those women can dance *ngoma* in other villages, but here in their own village, no. Because they grieve very much to see the tomb of their husband who was dancing with them.

The Clothing of Women
by Yesaya Cibambo

¶ Today Ngoni women are not easily recognised because they have taken foreign customs of clothing. Long ago Ngoni women were easily distinguished by their hair. They did not shave their hair except when their husband died. It was washed carefully and oiled and combed upwards to the top of the head in the *isikhutu*. The oil was *ipeka*, clarified butter. This was done every two or three days, or every day if they were grand women. They decorated it with small strings of beads dangling from a

thorn stuck at the top of the *isikhele*, and round it they put narrow bands of beads (*intseyeye* and *isinemaye*) arranged in layers. Royal women wore leopard and lion claws among the beads. Round the neck and on the arms they wore coils of brass wire (*amasongo*) which they got from the Arabs, or *izipute*, strings of beads wound round a piece of cloth. The kilt of soft dressed leather (*isidwaba*) reached from the waist to the knee, and wrapped well over. A long piece of soft leather (*inguyo*) was fastened on the left shoulder and reached a little below the knees. On the edges of the *inguyo* were fastened small bells made of brass (*ngomani*). Ngoni women did not like to cut their bodies with tattoo marks. They said it was ugly. The *inkosikazi* might decorate other wives at the *ngoma* dance because she had a large store of beads and wire and leather cloths.

The common features of the life of leading women as illustrated in these texts were: the number of attendants and servants in their households and their consequent freedom from manual work; the etiquette surrounding life in the *indlunkulu* and the big house, and the formality of hospitality, beer-drinks and dances; relationships with their *indunas*, and with their husbands, and, as illustrated by Margaret Jere, with the paternal grandmother who supervised their upbringing when they were young.

In addition to the *induna* in charge of the big house, the royal women and leading women in the villages of chiefs and *akhosazana* were surrounded by a number of young girls and serving women. These were known in pre-European days as domestic slaves or servants (*mizethe*), girl companions (*izidandani*), nurse girls (*alusi*) and older women attendants (*apupo*). Informants said that in pre-European days there were fifteen or twenty girls in each royal household and the number was constantly being added to when female slaves were captured in war and allocated as servants to the Paramount's wives. All the texts in this chapter refer to the fact that the royal women and the leading women did no work, and there was always a nostalgic refrain from senior women informants about the time devoted to hair-dressing and beauty treatments, to 'just sitting', and to dancing and drinking beer, while all the household tasks and the care of the children fell to the servants. The Ngoni royal women, even in the 1930's, commanded the labour of six to ten women and girls in each household. The hard physical work of fetching firewood and water, pounding grain, preparing vegetables and often cooking too, was done largely by servants in the Paramount's and chief's villages where I stayed. There were young nurse girls and older women to help with the children and with the adolescent girls. There were no longer any domestic slaves, and the domestic helpers, who were often distant relatives of the wives, appeared to enjoy the prestige of being attached to an important house.

The royal women in pre-European days were distinguished by the clothes and ornaments they wore which were reserved for the royal

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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clan and for women of leading Swazi and trans-Zambesi clans. Two of the texts emphasised the distinction conferred on the royal women by special clothing. Cibambo described the use of well-dressed soft skins and of beads and wire, the beads brought with them from the south, the brass wire obtained from the Arabs. In NaNdumbu's text she mentioned cloth bought from the stores. After the Ngoni women gave up wearing soft leather for skirts and the long piece of leather draped from the left shoulder, they used strong cotton cloth of dark blue or black, originally brought by the Arabs and later stocked by the stores. They tied the main cloth under their arms in a draped knot over the breast and on ceremonial occasions they added another fastened on the left shoulder like a plaid. A woman who had been a young girl in the village of Paramount Cikusi, but was not of a leading clan, said that in this village there was a great difference between the royal women and the rest: 'Only the daughters of Cikusi and his big wives could wear dark cloth as the Ngoni do. The others would have been killed if they tried to look like the big women'.

The royal women and the big wives and widows of chiefs and *abamnumu* were treated by all with whom they came in contact with the distinction and respect due to their prestige. They were addressed and thanked by the term *Nkomo*, with the clan name and the honorific prefix added, except where, as in the case of Bambo Manga, a title had been conferred. She was thanked '*Nkomo Bambo*'.[1] *Ukuhlonipa*, and its Nyanja equivalent *kulemekeza*, meaning to honour and to behave in a respectful manner towards senior people and those of superior rank, was an expression constantly used by the Ngoni and by the other peoples in the Ngoni kingdoms. The forms of showing respect were partly verbal; partly in the position adopted, with the eyes cast down and a slight curtsey by the women when facing someone; partly in the tone of voice when speaking; and partly in the deliberate and controlled behaviour noticed by several early travellers in Nyasaland. A particular verbal form of respect practised by the royal women was the use of the '*hlonipa* vocabulary.' *Hlonipa* practice survived only in the Encisweni area in northern Ngoniland where the Ngoni language was still spoken, but informants said that it had been common to all married women of trans-Zambesi clans in the northern kingdom when they had spoken Ngoni among themselves. The *hlonipa* vocabulary consisted of the substitution of special words, known only to the women, in order to avoid using a word in which the main syllable of a man's name occurred—a man with whom they were connected by marriage or by affinal relationship.[2] Thus Zwangendaba's wives and widows could

[1] *Bambo* (father) was a term of respect used for important senior men.

[2] *Hlonipa* as a form of special vocabulary was widely practised among the Nguni groups in South Africa. Haswell, A. W. 'Social Organization', in *The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa*, pp. 74, 77.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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never use any word in which *indaba* (meeting or affair) occurred. They substituted *incayo* for *indaba* and spoke of him as Zwangencayo. The women of the Ngomezulu clan could never use the word *ilanga* (sun) for which they substituted *ijiko*, since Langa was the name of the father of Zwide who had married into the Ngomezulu clan.

Though the particular verbal form of *hlonipa* which the Ngoni royal women brought from the south survived only in one area of northern Ngoniland, the concept inherent in it and the attitudes of honour and respect which it implied were expressed in the use of *Nkomo* in thanking and in the other non-verbal forms already mentioned. Manga, the Royal Sister of Cikusi, was as we have seen, thanked '*Nkomo Bambo*' but also with the formula '*Zikomo mutwana wenkosi*' (thanks, child of the Paramount). Among the central Ngoni there were two expressions of thanks which were probably a relic of *hlonipa* vocabulary since they were used only by the leading women. The customary form of thanking, and of taking leave after a conversation or after getting a reply to a question, was '*Zikomo*' with the clan name and honorific prefix added. The royal women in this area, when making the response to this form of thanking, always replied '*Zaithwa*' with the clan name, and they thanked each other by '*Zimata*' with the clan name instead of '*Zikomo*'. When I observed this and used it myself, they nudged each other and said 'She also is one of us.'

644 We have discussed so far the outward signs of respect shown to the royal women, and the visible marks of distinction in their clothes and the number of their attendants. We shall now examine the way in which the authority of the royal women was exercised. This will give some indication of their relationship to the political organization of the kingdoms, in so far as they had certain responsibilities to the people as a whole, and to their husbands and sons within the royal village where they lived. At the royal village the Queen Mother and her co-widows shared with the wives of the two leading houses to the right and left of the *indlunkulu*, the responsibility for preparing and serving food and beer for the Paramount and those whom he called to eat with him. The text by NyaNsangu[1] describes the etiquette of beer drinking in one of the chiefdoms in the northern kingdom, of sending food to the chief when he ate in the cattle kraal, and of assembling the wives in order of [264] precedence according to their houses to take their food. The formality of this etiquette was characteristic of Ngoni eating and drinking, and it was maintained by the organization and forethought of the royal women, the big wives and mothers of the Paramount, who planned the work of their own households and supervised that of the lesser wives who were attached to the two main houses.

[1] The procedure described in the text applied equally to the Paramount's village and to the villages of ruling chiefs. The Ngoni in that area used the term '*inkosi*' for chief as well as for Paramount.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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The responsibility of the royal women went beyond the sphere of domestic economy, fundamental though that was in a largely subsistence mode of living. They were expected to maintain good relations and settle all disputes among the women under them, except in cases where a dispute had to be taken to court, and such instances were generally regarded as a failure on their part to use their judgement and exert their authority. In pre-European days, when the Paramount and the chiefs held their judicial courts in the kraal, the royal women generally sat outside the kraal fence and listened, and were asked by the chief in the evening what they had to say about the judgements given. Some of the royal women had a great reputation for wisdom and intelligence, though they never spoke in public. They were still acting as unofficial advisers and critics to the chiefs during my visits in the 1930's, though it was recognised and often said that this kind of wisdom in judicial affairs was an unusual gift among women.

The title 'royal women' was adopted for this chapter in order to show the relationship of three particular women to the ruling Paramount in both kingdoms. It was difficult to discover whether the existence of an older full sister was accidental and she was given *ad hoc* recognition, or whether the relationship was considered so important that it was provided for by adoption if there did not happen to be an older full sister. The example of the Swazi, as described by Dr. Kuper, points to evidence of a recognised institution, by which in the case of the Paramount, a woman of the royal clan was always associated with her brother who was the ruler, with the same provision in the case of reigning chiefs and *ahemusana* of Swazi clans. Informants were able to give the names of Royal Sisters of former Paramounts prior to the establishment of the kingdoms in Nyasaland. It seemed, therefore, that this relationship was a permanent institution and that its chief significance lay in the public acknowledgement of a woman of the royal clan in a position close to her brother who was the ruling Paramount. The fact that she was of his clan, and that she had a special relationship to the Paramount's children, was a check to the power and authority exercised by the Queen Mother and the big wife, who were of other clans, over the Paramount's children of the royal clan.

In the case of the Queen Mother and the big wife, since the big wife in course of time became the Queen Mother, the permanent element in their positions was the setting up and maintenance of houses in the royal village and in other important villages. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter III of Part III. They shared with the Royal Sister the supervision and responsibility for the children of the Paramount, as Margaret Jere shows in her text; and in the royal village, and hence in the kingdom as a whole, they occupied leading positions in daily affairs as well as on ceremonial occasions.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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the Paramount's interest in modern aspects of administration, especially after his visit to the course for chiefs held at the Jeanes School in Zomba in 1934. The old councillors, sceptical though they were of many modern innovations, recognized that they were in line with European ideas of administration, and also that they appealed to the younger educated men in the kingdom who had travelled and seen other countries and ways of living.

The Paramount married NaNdau as his big wife, and though, as the text mentions, he married two other wives when urged by the senior men, he sent them away after a year or two and NaNdau remained his only wife. She had an assured position since she bore him five sons and two daughters, the first-born being a daughter and receiving all the respect due to a Royal Sister. One of the brothers of NaNdau was chief of a division, and another was *mfumo wenkosi* to the Paramount. She succeeded in maintaining much of the traditional pattern in the royal village and the big house. Her personal supervision of the household was thorough and competent. She exercised complete authority over the girls and women belonging to the household and arranged that the Ngoni custom of examining the young girls, including her own daughter, at regular intervals should be maintained. Her knowledge of Ngoni songs and dances, and her own skilled and graceful participation in the dances on state occasions, brought her before the people in her role as the big wife. At the feasts given by the Paramount she moved about among the people to serve them, and listened to complaints from the women about affairs in their villages which she then handed on to her husband.

The back verandah and all the outbuildings were the domain of the Paramount's wife. When I was there, she had some ten or twelve girls and women as well as several men working for her. They came and went if they had homes elsewhere, and the personnel changed often. All the household work was done by them: bringing water and fuel, pounding maize, and a good deal of the cooking, though this was closely supervised by the Paramount's wife. No beer was made in the household as it was against the rules of the church to which they belonged. In other Ngoni households of subordinate chiefs and *akawazana* who were not Christian, the brewing of beer was a time-absorbing part of the household tasks and was shared by the different wives under the supervision of the big house. In Magangu, when the Paramount was entertaining unexpected guests and wanted to offer them beer, he inquired from his *indewu* if anyone was brewing beer in the village, and sent for some for which he paid. When he knew beforehand that guests were coming who would expect beer to be offered to them as part of the Paramount's hospitality, he told his *indewu* to see that beer was made in one of the village households, and he paid for it.

The cooking which went on in the big house kitchens was always extensive. The Paramount, his wife and six children had two meals a

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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made with the approval of the dead man's kin. Although by this arrangement the woman was for a while removed from her allotted place in the system, the *status quo ante* was restored with the return of the children to their pater's kinsmen.

8. Segmentation

The primary cleavage among a man's children was between the children of one band and the children of another. Within a band, the division was into separate 'houses'. Where there were children of more than one mother in the same 'house', that is where the senior wife as well as the linked wife had borne children or where there was more than one fertile linked co-wife with the same senior, the division was between the groups of full siblings. These lines of cleavage were expressed spatially by the arrangements of the huts belonging to each segment. At the top of the political hierarchy, the arrangement of the Paramount Chief's queens determined the major divisions into which the nation was split residentially, with a senior queen in charge of each major royal village, and lesser queens in charge of politically dependent royal villages. At the bottom, the man with two or three wives saw his sons group themselves round their mothers while retaining a common allegience to him.

Thus we see that in 'the time of peace' marriage was tied to a clear-cut residential system based on patrilineal descent and virilocal residence, modified by political status deriving ultimately from the Paramount Chief. The position of males in this system was determinate, although not unalterable. By the processes of marriage males were supplied with legitimate offspring. Although descent and succession were traced through males, the pattern of segmentation of this patrilineal system was determined by the organization of wives. The relative status of co-wives was perpetuated in the relationship between the segments which sprang from them.

In this system the elementary family of man, wife, and children did not emerge as an important grouping. In all serious enterprises a person derived support from his male agnates, and it was to the organised kin that the fertility of the woman was transferred by the payment of bridewealth. By the time a man had advanced in status sufficiently to be head of a division or a village, he had acquired many dependants who were not true kinsmen and his wives had been divided into bands. With the recently captured families, these considerations did not apply with quite the same force, for there were many poor men who had only one wife. These people depended on their political superior for cattle, and the women were to some extent under the control of his great wife, in so far as agricultural work and beer brewing were concerned. Even the rearing of children once they had been weaned was carried on outside the elementary family. Children were sent to their grandmother's house to be trained and indoctrinated with Ngoni values. The recent captives

TRADITION AND PRESTIGE AMONG THE NGONI

MARGARET READ

1. The Ngoni People. Before I made my first camp in an Ngoni village, many Europeans had said to me, 'There are practically no Ngoni left to-day. They are all hopelessly mixed with other tribes. None of them keep to the Ngoni customs any longer. Their chiefs are no good.' From the doorway of my hut I saw people coming all day long to the Paramount Chief, behaving towards him with profound respect, bringing him presents, working for him. His children formed a special group in the village, easily recognizable by their bearing and their manners. Old *indunas*[1] came to instruct me, as they had instructed chiefs in their day, on the duties of a ruler, and the code of Ngoni laws. Old warriors in war dress came and danced by the cattle kraal and sang praise songs. Courts were held with scrupulous regard for order and justice. Other chiefs came visiting from distant parts with their retinues, and were received ceremonially. It soon became apparent that here was the centre of a political state, whose head was invested with prestige and authority over a wide area, and where behaviour to the Paramount and to every one else was strictly regulated by custom, and as strictly observed. These were Ngoni, and they and their fellow Ngoni in other areas[1] for the next ten months introduced me to the Ngoni people. The European assertion, that they no longer existed as a people, they laughed at, and proceeded to demonstrate that the contrary was true.

The Ngoni are found to-day scattered over four East African territories. The largest groups are in Nyasaland in the districts of Mzimba, Dowa, Fort Manning, Dedza, and Ncheu. In Northern Rhodesia they are in the Fort Jameson and Lundazi districts bordering on Nyasaland. Another section is in Portuguese East Africa on the South-West border of Nyasaland. Under other names there are Ngoni settlements in Tanganyika Territory. The present divisions of the Ngoni are due partly to European frontiers, partly to the fact that more than

[1] According to the census returns there are about 80,000 Ngoni in Northern Rhodesia and nearly 250,000 in Nyasaland, with other groups in Tanganyika Territory and Portuguese East Africa.

[1] [i.e., military leaders.—Analyst]

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

687 sensitive to suggestions that a chief may be oppressing his people,
648 usually works through the Paramount. One minor chief was sent to the Paramount's village for a period of instruction in order that he might learn how to rule wisely. On another occasion a chief who had abused the Administration was fined one month's salary by the Paramount. In both these instances the Administration was the initiator of the Paramount Chief's action, but he may also act without reference to it. It was reported to the Paramount that a certain minor chief had struck one of his subjects who had been slow to offer him beer. The Paramount warned the minor chief that he might kill someone this way, and that he ought to fine people, not to strike them. In a dispute between a minor chief and his court clerk over some new court furniture, which the chief wished to use in his own house, the Paramount intervened and ordered that the chairs be put in the courthouse.

643 The Paramount himself is subject to social constraint, and may be criticized by his senior lieutenants. He is advised on how he should behave by these men, and if his behaviour is unsatisfactory they may rebuke him. At county meetings, headmen and others can voice their
644 complaints against the royal house as a whole, and have from time to
661 time protested successfully at such a meeting against too many of the Native Authority posts being filled by members of the royal lineage.

The Native Authority

647 Under the Native Authority system, introduced by the Administra-
[648] tion in 1929, there are a number of paid officials, apart from the chiefs, whose salaries are met by the Native Treasury. They include councillors, assessors, clerks, police, postmen, school attendance officers, and others. The most important of these, and the most highly paid, are
692 the councillors and assessors. They sit once or twice a week in court and hear cases brought before them. Each of the chiefs has a court, and for the most part the cases that come before a county court are brought by people living in the county. When litigants from two counties are involved there is no definite rule as to which court will hear the case and it largely depends on the wish of the instigator of the proceedings. Cases come before the Paramount Chief's county court that concern people from other counties and a litigant may take his case from one chief to another, including the Nyasaland chiefs, in an attempt to obtain a favourable and enforceable decision. The Appeal Court sits at the Paramount Chief's village and is held once a month.

II:Lancaster G-5 (ca. 1935) 1937 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

migration about 1820; her burial place is unknown. She died without issue. She was the eldest daughter of Nombdongolo, who was a brother of Zwide and Sigode, and a son of Langa Vimba Nqumayo. She was a cousin to Mazukuza, son of Sigode, and to Nompetu, daughter of Zwide, who married Matshobana, the father of Mzilikazi. Sometimes it happens that a great wife or other major wife is not blessed with children. In these cases another woman is placed in her "house" with the object of raising seed to it. The children resulting are looked upon as children of the establishment in which their mother was "placed" and are in the same position as if born to the major wife; the eldest son of a chief's "Great Wife" inherits the chieftainship of the tribe on the death of his father. This was, and is, the custom of the Ngoni; it is also known to the Achewa and Awanga Tribes. This custom is known to the Ngoni as *Nokwaza*.

Zongendaba therefore took as *Nokwaza* Suwra Nqumayo, a younger sister of Lwiwawa, and by her he had issue as follows:—Mzilo Mpezeni, the eldest son, "the Inkosana of the Inkhonkolo," *Jackson*, Mtwalalithi, and Mkhitshwa Makekwa. Suwra was born about 1808 near St. Lucia Bay. She migrated with the chief and followed him through all his wanderings until his death, after which she accompanied her son and heir, Mzilo Mpezeni, into what is now the Fort Jameson district. There she settled in her village called "Dingani," where she died in 1900 and was buried near the site of the old village of Mtengwbwi Uka Suwra close to the Kakolo stream; her grave is now marked by an euphorbia tree. The site is on the farm owned by Major *Jefferies*, O.B.E., which prior to the invasion of the Ngoni used to be the land of the *Achewa chief*, Kampoza.

Suwra is well remembered by many natives who are living to-day, and although she died at a great age it is said that she was in possession of her full faculties until the last. She is described as being a real chieftainess and it is said that in later years if annoyed by the younger generation she would lay about her with her *nokiza* (staff) in a lusty manner. Many amusing tales are told of her astuteness and dry humour.

After Zongendaba's death, Suwra chose for a very beautiful woman, named Nkwazana, who was a young sister-wife to the house and who had borne no children, one, Sawasa Mazumba, as a cook-minor, for which he received twenty head of cattle. A daughter was born and named Mdawiri Jere; she now resides in the Fort Manning District of Nyasaland and from her this information was obtained. Mdawiri looked upon Mzilo Mpezeni as her brother, and Mdawiri was, and is, looked upon as one of Zongendaba's children. She married Mdawumbi, since dead, and has one son, Mdawumbi Hara.

It is agreed by the old indunas that Mzilo Mpezeni would have been about nine years of age when he crossed over the Zambezi, that he was carried across as befitted a Paramount Chief's heir, that, prior to the crossing, Zongendaba had given him a little shield and an assegai, and that he had killed his first duiker buck before the crossing. This is also borne out by the sons of Zimukazi Lava Ngoma and Ngambo Mhawa, both of whose fathers were set the task of being servants to the chief's heir in his youth.